



Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

In Reply Refer To: 562/00

Dear Veteran:

I want to take this opportunity to keep you informed of some upcoming changes at the Erie VA Medical Center. First, I want to thank you for your service to this great Nation. We consider it a privilege to serve as your healthcare provider.

Due to a very low number of patients in our intensive care unit, the 4-bed intensive care unit at the medical center will close on September 17, 2012. We have relied on local community hospitals to provide a level of intensive care above our capabilities for some time and will continue to work closely with these hospitals to make sure that our patients receive seamless intensive care services when needed.

Erie VA's 22-bed inpatient acute care unit located on our 6th Floor will remain open.

With the closing of the intensive care unit, two other services will be affected. The emergency room will become an Urgent Care Center on September 17, 2012. The Urgent Care Center will be open from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. every day of the year. These hours should meet the needs of most of the patients seeking urgent care.

Also, surgeries requiring a hospital stay will now be performed in the community or at another VA. There will be a small impact as more than 95 percent of surgical procedures we currently perform are delivered in an outpatient or same day setting. Erie VA will continue to provide outpatient surgeries.

We are working closely with community hospitals. Please be sure Erie VA is notified when you present to a community Emergency Department or are admitted. We will be following the applicable laws that govern payment to determine eligibility for payment of those services received in the community.

The Erie VA Medical Center is **not** going away. There is a solid investment in this facility as you can see by our plans to expand our campus. The expansion includes a new Ambulatory Surgery Center, a new Behavioral Health building, a free standing Community Living Center, and a parking garage.

The Erie VAMC is committed to those who served this great Nation. To that end, we will always place Veterans needs at the forefront of facility decisions.

The attached fact sheet provides you additional information about these changes. Please keep the fact sheet handy for situations that may occur after hours or with a community hospital.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL D. ADELMAN, MD
Medical Center Director

Enclosure: Erie VA Fact Sheet

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Erie VA Medical Center
135 East 38th Street Boulevard
Erie PA, 16504-1596





URGENT/EMERGENT SERVICES FACT SHEET

Here's a quick guide on how to respond to urgent or emergent health situations based on our upcoming changes to the ICU and Emergency Room.

WHEN CAN I VISIT THE URGENT CARE CENTER?

The Urgent Care Center will be open every day from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. If you are unsure of when to come in to our Urgent Care Center, you may still call our nurse line 24/7 at 814-860-2100. If you have an emergent health issue, please call 911 or visit the nearest emergency room.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I USE AN AMBULANCE?

Our Urgent Care Center will no longer be taking emergency ambulances, only ambulances transporting non-emergent patients or patients being transferred from another local hospital. So, the majority of times, when you dial 911 you will be transported to a local hospital.

WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE AN EMERGENCY?

If you are experiencing an emergency, please call 911 or visit the nearest emergency room.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I NEED HOSPITAL ADMISSION?

Erie VA Medical Center will continue to admit sick patients in our 22-bed acute care unit and encourages patients to come to us when you feel ill or have concerns. If you feel very ill, are having severe chest pain, shortness of breath or stroke like symptoms we recommend you dial 911 or go to the closest emergency room. If the emergency room indicates that you should be admitted, have them contact the Erie VAMC to see if you can be admitted to our facility.

FOR MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

If you just want to talk with someone and are feeling distress: call the Veterans Crisis Line to talk with someone who can provide emotional support at: 1-800-273-8255.

Remember our Urgent Care Center will be open every day from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. to assist you if you are experiencing a mental or emotional crisis.

If you are in an emotional crisis after hours, think you need admission, or are unsure what to do, call 814-868-8661, ask for the MAA and then ask to speak with behavioral health on call.

If you are suicidal and in imminent danger of hurting yourself or someone else, call 911 immediately.

PAYMENT/FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

If you have questions about payment, please call 814-860-2800 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. After hours, phone calls can be directed to the MAA at 814-860-2165.